

Underwings dark, plain olive grey-brown, not so dark as in Green Sandpiper. Bill with olive-green base, remainder blackish to dark brown, very slightly decurved. Legs pale olive-green with yellowish tinge.

Eye dark.

While feeding the bird was usually silent, but on becoming anxious at the approach of people it uttered a repeated *tip*. As it flew, it sometimes uttered a double note *teep teep*. These vocalisations were quite different from those of the accompanying Wood or Green Sandpiper.

In addition, the following points of behaviour were noted. At times the bird fed voraciously. Once it consumed a small fish and on four occasions it caught small frogs, but swallowed them on only two of the occasions. Before taking flight it sometimes raised its wings like an African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*. On being disturbed it either flew to the other end of the dam or towered up, calling and flew out of sight. Despite disturbance it was remarkably faithful to this particular dam, returning in as little as 30 minutes, and was also confiding. When disturbed on 17 February 1994, a Green Sandpiper which was also present first flew to the other end of the dam and on being approached again flew off silently, towering into the sky. The Solitary Sandpiper, on the other hand, made short flights to the other side of the dam, bobbed and called repeatedly but did not fly away, even after being put up several times. Likewise, on 27 February 1994, the Solitary Sandpiper walked the length of the shore opposite five quiet but unconcealed observers.

The presence of this bird for over a month represents the first record of Solitary Sandpiper for Zambia, and possibly the only well-substantiated one for the Afrotropical region.

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Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus* in Seychelles, first for the Afro-Malagasy Region

Rob Lucking

At 11.30 hr on 8 October 1994 whilst walking back to the BirdLife International project house on Fregate Island, Seychelles, I flushed a small heron from the grassy path leading up to the Bamboo River on the island's main plateau. Although the bird was only seen briefly in flight before disappearing into thick bamboo, the rufous brown flight feathers

concolourous with the wing coverts, mantle and tail were distinctive. The bird was obviously not either of the two small herons resident in Seychelles, Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis* and Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*. The only species that came immediately to mind was Cinnamon Bittern, a species with which I was familiar from a trip to Indonesia in 1991.

Another brief view was obtained at 14.00 hr when the bird was flushed from the Bamboo River but from 18.00 hr until 18.20 hr, prolonged flight views were obtained when the bird was flushed from *Scaevola* bushes along the southern side of the airstrip. The following description was taken:

A small heron with a long slender bill. The upperparts were entirely a rich rufous-brown with no contrast in colour between the flight feathers and wing coverts. This colour was particularly striking in bright sunlight. The underparts were slightly paler but with heavy rufous brown streaking. Neither leg nor bill colour was determined. The bird was seen to fly into *Pterocarpus* woodland at dusk and was lost to view. It was not seen subsequently.

The two other species of small heron resident in Seychelles could immediately be ruled out. Yellow Bittern, a scarce breeder on the larger islands, has a very pale brown mantle and underparts with contrasting black primaries and outer secondaries. Green-backed Heron is a much darker and bulkier species and much less secretive than Yellow Bittern.

Several other species of heron could potentially occur as vagrants to Seychelles. Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* occurs as a breeding species in central and southern Europe, parts of the Middle East, southern Africa, Madagascar, north east India and Australia. European birds undergo post-breeding dispersal in all directions and also migrate south to tropical Africa. Madagascar birds occasionally migrate to Africa during the dry season. Little Bittern has a dark mantle and flight feathers with pale buff secondary coverts forming a pale wing-panel in flight. Schrenck's Bittern *I. eurhythmus* is very similar to Yellow Bittern but has a darker brown head, neck and mantle. Females are conspicuously spotted. This species is restricted to the Far East but has been recorded twice in Europe (Italy and Germany). Malayan Night-heron *Gorsachius melanophus* is found in south-west and northern India, south China through Indochina to the Philippines. The movements of this species are poorly known but south-west Indian birds apparently migrate south to Sri Lanka with northern Indian birds wintering in the Greater Sundas and the Malay Peninsula. Vagrant birds have been recorded from Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean. Adult birds are superficially similar to Cinnamon Bittern in that



Cinnamon Bittern *Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*
By Colin Towse

adults have predominantly chestnut wing coverts and mantle and rufous underparts. However, the wing feathers are blackish-brown with white tips to the primaries and structurally Malayan Night-heron is bigger and bulkier with a short stubby downward-arched bill.

Cinnamon Bittern is a widespread Asian species being found throughout the Indian Subcontinent, South-East Asia and north-east China. Northern populations are migratory, moving through peninsular Malaysia to Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines in September/October. Southern populations are sedentary. Birds in India and Pakistan perform local movements and possibly seasonal migrations in relation to water conditions. The species has been recorded in Primorskiy Krai Territory, south-east Russia.

This record constitutes the first for this species both in Seychelles and the Afro-Malagasy region and has been accepted by the Seychelles Bird Records Committee. ♪

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